

January 23, 2009

Santa Barbara City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness and Community Relations

Dear Iya Falcone, Dale Francisco, and Helene Schneider:

I am Maureen Earls, a member of Santa Barbara CLUE (Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice). I have been CLUE's representative at the sub committee meetings on homeless services and community impact. I also serve on the BOCH Governing Board, as a representative of faith communities.

The purpose of this letter is to share with you the suggestions of CLUE from the perspective of our work with you in implementing BOCH.

Background

Recently our CLUE organization asked Helene Schneider and Roger Heroux to attend a meeting of about twenty local religious leaders to discuss some of the problems and draft recommendations addressed by this sub committee. As a follow up, CLUE designated a sub committee to bring its response to you.

Jon Lemmond and I, members of the subcommittee, are representing CLUE in our written communications to you. My focus will be on sharing how our education and funding outreach to our faith communities for BOCH can be linked in a positive way to our support for the recommendations of your committee. Jon's letter will focus on representing CLUE values related to the recommendations, which also reflect the values of his faith community, Montecito Covenant Church.

We have a unique focus. Our mission in CLUE is to look at issues through the lens of our shared values in our faith traditions and work for economic justice in response to the needs of those marginalized by economic inequities in the Santa Barbara community. Our vision is that justice prevails when equal access to shared resources ensures lives of dignity and respect for all. BOCH is a great example of a plan reflecting these values and this vision.

Suggestions

Two Overall Changes:

First: A Review of Language Using BOCH Model

As we bring our specific CLUE suggestions to you, we believe it is extremely important that sub committee recommendations to the City Council reflect the spirit of compassionate care for all the individuals of our community. The wording and language of these recommended strategies will be the first general public communication regarding the recommendations for services for homeless individuals and community impact, the first education piece for our community. We definitely feel uncomfortable with the language as it is currently drafted. We suggest Roger Heroux help revise the wording so it keeps in tone and spirit with what Santa Barbara has begun in such a positive collaborative spirit in the BOCH plan.

Second: Development of an Accountability Plan

We ask the committee to identify for our communities what successful implementation of this recommendation plan will look like? An important measure of success for us will be how many lives we have changed for the better. We suggest the accountability plan include such items as: a

list of specific activities, areas of focus, responsible entities, initial measures of success (data), yearly action plan, and schedule of progress updates. With an accountability plan we can know what is happening to the people most impacted by the implementation.

Specific Recommendations

Priority of Prevention

In terms of resources and immediate implementation of specific activities, we recommend that you give first priority to prevention strategies #11 and #12.

The current draft of recommendations begins with the enforcement strategies.

We recommend prevention first because of the nature of the specific population of homeless individuals involved in the negative community impact. Roger Heroux's report on the homeless in Santa Barbara states that it is not the 80% of homeless, who are temporary transitional homeless individuals, that cause the problems that are the focus of this task force. It is rather the 10 – 15 % of the homeless population who are chronic homeless, individuals: (1) with disabling conditions (diagnosable mental illness, substance abuse disorder, developmental disability, or chronic physical disorder) and (2) who have been homeless for a year or more, or 4 times in 3 years. The report states they live on our streets, sleep in parks, move in and out of shelters, jails, and emergency rooms. To quote: "This population includes individuals who passively or aggressively panhandle in shopping areas or engage in public rants or other disruptive behavior."

While these individuals may be marginalized by their own addictions and disabilities, they also suffer from economic inequities: closing of low income housing; closing of mental health facilities; lack of beds for recovery; increase in job losses or low wages; and lack of resources for health care.

So the question is: which of the draft recommendations will succeed with this particular population? According to the same report and research on chronic homeless individuals, the most humane, cost effective and successful solution is moving them from homeless to housing with support services.

Therefore, neither our values as faith communities, nor research on most effective practices, support solving the problems by more enforcement: more restrictive ordinances and putting more of these chronic homeless individuals in jail where there are not the appropriate services for the mentally ill or those needing rehabilitation services. We heard from law enforcement during our meetings that, of the top offenders, they were unsure how many arrested were mentally ill or chronic homeless needing services. This could be one specific criteria of success: was every top offender screened by outreach staff for service needs not provided by the jail and for those meeting chronic homeless criteria. And then, how was a needed alternative solution provided.

Some have said, here at these task force meetings, that it is not these chronic homeless, but young troublemakers, who come in and disrupt business and community residents. They are said to be the reason for the ordinances. But this is not the population of concern the City Council set before this task force. This task force specifically states the homeless and community relations as the focus. And it is the chronic homeless needing services and housing, as described above, that would be most negatively affected by the ordinances recommended.

We ask then, how can shared resources of Santa Barbara ensure lives of dignity and respect for all? The report on homeless gives us the guideline: redirect resources away from responses that

merely manage a crisis to those with the explicit goal of ending homelessness. So therefore our first priority is support for the following recommendations for prevention:

- #12 City assistance for increasing affordable housing. We have seen the success of the El Carrillo model. Mike Foley mentioned another model, less expensive, called the Master Leasing Model. We understand it would provide the same guidelines as the El Carrillo for homeless individuals. A non profit organization would ensure potential housing owners of rent payments and protection of their property, and would also provide case managers for each resident. Whatever the model, most important is support for a recommendation for specific activities to increase affordable housing. Again the report on the homeless in Santa Barbara sites research showing 83% of mentally ill homeless remained in permanent housing with support a year later. So too 90 % remained sober as compared to 55% in a halfway house. The key to the elimination of the chronic homeless individuals from the streets is not the key to a jail cell, but the key to a room and outreach support staff to accompany these individuals.
- #11 Alternative Giving: Keys to a Room
We support some kind of reframing of the language of "panhandling and alternative giving campaign". We have concerns with reinforcing the stereotype of identifying all homeless individuals as panhandlers. We would suggest a focus first on educating the public on the most humane, compassionate, cost effective and proven successful support for chronic homeless individuals: support for permanent housing and support services. Then it follows that we can develop an alternative giving campaign where compassionate communities can make donations for housing vouchers for these homeless individuals, eliminating the detrimental effects of giving cash to those on the streets who, without the option of housing with services, resort to using the money for supporting harmful and even fatal addictions. .

Given some kind of reframing of the alternative giving recommendation, CLUE would commit to helping with this education campaign in our faith communities.

Interventions

We support the interventions proposed, numbers 6 through 9.

We **strongly** support intervention #6: To increase capacity at Casa Esperanza for year round beds for the most vulnerable: homeless women, mentally ill, disabled and elderly.

We understand Mike Foley is suggesting 40 additional beds. Since this is estimated to cost an additional \$50,000 for extra staff and food, CLUE would commit to facilitating a campaign with faith communities to give financial help with the cost of these beds.

Mindful of #6, and the potential impact on the Milpas community, we join Casa Esperanza in supporting recommendation #4: Implementing the Principles of a Recovery Zone for the Milpas Area to the extent legally permissible. This would fulfill the promise of mitigating the shelter impact, made to the Milpas community when Casa Esperanza was originally planned. It would also meet the needs and requests of those in the Casa Esperanza Recovery Program.

Summary

CLUE has been an active supporter of the BOCH plan. Its language is compassionate in spirit and inspired us to become partners. Its recommendations for activities were based on actual data

about whom the individual homeless in our community are, their needs, and resulted from researched best practices for addressing those needs in a humane, successful and fiscally responsible way. We could then support an awareness education and funding campaign, because our faith traditions call us to work for that vision of justice prevailing when access to shared resources ensure lives of dignity and respect for all.

We ask that your sub committee follow this excellent model with the current recommendations. We would then look forward to being your partner once again.

With appreciation of all you do,
Maureen Earls, Santa Barbara CLUE Board Member

Don't mitigate the problem, end the disgrace ~Philip Mangano, the Executive Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, to the Santa Barbara community (July 10, 2008)

In keeping with the stated goals of the Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness the members of CLUE urge the City Council Subcommittee on Homeless Issues and Community Relations to prioritize and implement those strategies which focus on intervention and prevention for those struggling with homelessness. We understand these approaches to be fundamentally more cost effective and capable of producing successful systemic change. In these tough economic times we caution everyone to remain vigilant against rhetoric and measures that often serve to criminalize and alienate those who are homeless and again turn to the wisdom of Philip Mangano, who reminds us that "the punitive approach has never worked anywhere. It's expensive and demoralizing to everyone involved, and at best it can only hide the problem briefly." Those recommendations that will be most effective, therefore, are the ones that recognize everyone's needs and, in turn, offer everyone justice.

Combining deep compassion with unflinching realism we specifically urge that the following proactive and helpful strategies to be given priority:

- Thirty more beds annually allocated for Casa Esperanza to be made available for the most vulnerable of the homeless population: women with children and the elderly. This population can be served with minimal impact on the neighborhood.

- Greater coordination and cooperation between police officers and street outreach teams for mental illness screenings of top ten homeless offenders and greater funding for mental health staff and restorative policing all of which aims to move people into more stable living situations rather than short lived jail terms or emergency room care.
 - Securing locations and funding for more detox beds for those recovering from drug and alcohol addiction.
 - Formulate appropriation measures for use of the Coastal Zone Affordable Overnight Accommodation Fund to provide emergency hotel vouchers for vulnerable populations as well as aid in helping these people move into more substantial, long-term housing. If the real goal is to help get those who are homeless off the street then they simply must be offered a place to belong not simply be removed.
 - Finally, because we desire concrete solutions rather than sentimentality we urge the council to create and implement an assessment protocol which, in six months time, will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the above stated goals.
- Currently, the most pervasive research points to preventive measures as being the most fiscally responsible and most beneficial for ending the problem of homelessness.

We thank you for your time in thinking through this complex and important issue. As people of faith we pray for you in the critical work that you do to help create a society which brings all people together for a just society.



South Coast Homeless Advisory Committee • Santa Barbara County

January 26, 2009

Committee Co-Chairs

County of Santa Barbara
Supervisor, 3rd District
Doreen Farr

City of Santa Barbara
Councilmember
Helene Schneider

City of Goleta
Councilmember
Margaret Connell

Members

Emily R. Allen

Steve Farugie

Jennifer Ferraez

Michael Foley

Fr. Jon-Stephen Hedges

Samuel Leer

Petra Lowen

Nancy McCradie

Gary Mueller

Iya Falcone, Chair
City Council Subcommittee on
Homelessness and Community Relations
City of Santa Barbara
P.O. Box 1990
Santa Barbara, CA 93102-1990

Re: Draft Discussion of Strategies to Address Community Issues Related to
Homelessness in the City of Santa Barbara

Dear Councilmember Falcone,

The South Coast Homeless Advisory Committee thanks the Santa Barbara City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness and Community Relations members and staff for your attention to the problem of homelessness. This complex problem requires coordinated, yet simple solutions and many of these ideas exist in the draft document. After reviewing the draft proposal SCHAC makes the following recommendations:

- 1) Any increase in enforcement must be simultaneously applied to increases in outreach, prevention and bed capacity. It has been shown in other communities that when enforcement, social services and public attention is focused, simultaneous, and sustained over long periods of time, that street sleeping is no longer an intractable problem, but can be dramatically decreased. However, if singular solutions are attempted in a vacuum, the result is increased suffering for the homeless and community alike. We cannot allow this to happen yet again in greater Santa Barbara. We must take advantage of this opportunity to permanently create measurable, permanent results that strengthen both the human and business climate in Santa Barbara by embracing significant change and innovation.
- 2) Ensure that all enforcement mechanisms in the plan are fully vetted to guarantee that individual civil rights are not violated. City funds cannot be wasted on legal challenges. Rather, all available resources must be used for initiatives that have been proven to end homelessness, such as street outreach and supportive housing services.

- 3) Ensure that the plan takes into account, and specifically addresses the impact of enforcement tactics on other cities in the region. There is the potential to shift people in need of help from one community to the other without sufficient coordination. Isla Vista is one specific example. In this example, the Isla Vista Master Plan calls for the creation of homeless housing in Isla Vista but this plan has been virtually ignored. Along with the enforcement strategies, the City has the opportunity to encourage the County to meet its obligations in Isla Vista while also meeting the needs of Santa Barbara.

We would like to note that Councilmember Helene Schneider serves on both the SCHAC and the Subcommittee on Homelessness. However to avoid a conflict of interest, Councilmember Schneider chose to abstain from any of the SCHAC's discussions, and she was not present during the discussions.

Thank you again for your time and attention and we look forward to reviewing the final draft and making further recommendations.

Sincerely,

Doreen Farr, Co-Chair

Margaret Connell, Co-Chair

January 28, 2009

Dear Committee members;

I applaud your current efforts to effectively reduce and minimize the homeless problem in Santa Barbara. While there are many dedicated individuals who are trying to help those who are truly in need, there is also a 'homeless industry' that is developing in Santa Barbara, filled with those who no doubt have good intentions, but whose primary career now requires that a "homeless problem" CONTINUES or they themselves will be out of work. Thus they are really DE motivated to actually correct the problem. They ARE motivated to put on every appearance of sincerely trying to resolve the problem, but truly their own future depends on the problem continuing and this has resulted in the growth of the problem as we see it today.

I have lived in several cities, including Thousand Oaks and LA, and have taken a special interest in the vast numbers of people who 'label' themselves as homeless when in fact they have made a career choice to 'be' homeless. At one point in the past, out of curiosity I even went to a 'hobo convention' to hear what they had to say. I have spoken with 'homeless' people in these cities, including our own, and when they are candid, they admit they came here because Santa Barbara is being turned into a magnet for the intentionally homeless.

They note the ever increasing industry centered around enabling them as one reason for this. The nice weather, the abundant tourists, the effective lack of any serious efforts to remove them from panhandling in the streets or camping in public spaces, or squatting all day on public benches on State street where they panhandle rent free and with no business taxes to pay, are all reasons Santa Barbara is such a 'homeless destination' now. They wear the 'homeless' moniker as a badge of pride, when in fact, they are simply gaming us all for money. This group of people makes up more than half of the 'homeless population' in my own opinion.

I have spoken with the City Administrator about this issue, and he has explained to me the difficulty in dealing with 'free speech' issues and posting of 'no overnight parking signs', it seems the homeless advocates have some fairly active attorney's who also wish to continue enabling them at public expense.

I think, therefore, that the most important aspect of what you are trying to achieve are items 3 and 4 on your list of priorities. Only by aggressive passing of new laws, or aggressive protection of the rights of all 'non homeless' citizens (we do have rights too) with City Attorney's etc, and by creative solutions designed to separate the truly needy so they can be helped, from the opportunistic who need to simply be removed from our community, can we truly achieve the upper hand and regain the dignity, cleanliness and beauty of the City we all love so much.

I thank you for reading these comments, and hope that your efforts are successful so that I never again have the experience I had last year when I was parking my car in the lot near State Street and the freeway, As I pulled in to my spot I was greeted by 'bare buttocks' poking out of the bushes and defecating in broad daylight inches from my car. This is not what our children and our tourists, or any of us, deserves.

Thank-you

Dr. Chris R. Kamen
Santa Barbara, California

Gray, Sue

From: Melinda Werner [mwerner@villaelegante.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 9:50 AM
To: Falcone, Iya; Francisco, Dale; Schneider, Helene; Blum, Marty; Gray, Sue; Mannix, Frank
Subject: increasing of amount of beds at Casa Esperanza

Dear Council Members: I am a business owner in the lower Milpas area. I own a 6 unit vacation rental property on Orilla del Mar. I have witnessed the building of Casa Esperanza. I have witnessed the increase of homeless in the area over the years.

The shelter is not helping with the homeless issue. It is worsening the problem. As I patronize the local stores, I am often confronted in the parking lots with people asking for money for food. I could be your biggest proponent because I always suggest going to Casa Esperanza. I tell them you will be fed and you'll have a place to sleep. Not once have I been successful in getting someone to stop begging and to go to the shelter for assistance. I've heard various reasons why not to use Casa Esperanza including, "They are serving fish today and I don't like fish"; "They make you shave"; "Oh, I'm not homeless so I don't need to use that place. And, I have an abusive girlfriend who hangs out there so I'm not going there." The people, who should be benefiting from the shelter, have now become picky and selective. I truly believe that adding beds will not have a beneficial impact since many of the homeless in the area do not want the help anyway.

I also think that the Shelter is attracting people who are not homeless; but, people who are just plain loiters and possible drug users. I witness people loitering up and down Milpas at all hours of the day. Being confronted in the Trader Joes parking lot by a person who asked for money but then claimed he wasn't homeless only confirms this thought. At one point, the police were so on top of making sure the homeless were not drinking and loitering at the baseball field. This was wonderful. The businesses in the area benefited. I saw many locals walking around, sitting and enjoying the park. But, I rarely see the police combing the area now. And, I've seen the return of loiters sitting at the park and blatantly drinking out in the open. Do we really have enough police force to monitor the area? Before you even consider an increase in the number of beds, we need to address whether there is enough funding to increase the police force in the area.

As a business owner, I've witnessed a negative effect on my business. I am in the tourist industry and I rely on whether a visitor wants to vacation in the area. When we first opened, I had the benefit of having repeat clientele. But, the list of repeat clientele has been shrinking. A few of my clientele have written letters to the Santa Barbara News Press addressing their concerns. The common complaint has been the homeless in the area. I used to live on the property and I personally have chased people off the property from using the outdoor shower while they were nude; my tenants have experienced knocking on the door in the middle of the night from a homeless or drugged out person; we have had theft; I have homeless storing their bikes on my property; I have spent many times cleaning human feces and used toilet paper from my landscaping; my husband had to call the police when his life was threatened by an irritable homeless female who was trying to store her backpack on our property. The list goes on.

After the Tea Fires, we accommodated a few local Santa Barbara families at our property. But after a month of renting, these families wanted to leave. They felt intimidated and harassed by the homeless in the area. Their children felt threatened.

Please, listen to the local Santa Barbara people! This is a problem that has to be resolved. And, Casa Esperanza is not helping the issue. It is only worsening it. The shelter has harmed the individuals it was meant to benefit (by allowing them to sustain this lifestyle), to the local businesses, to the tourist industry, and to local Santa Barbarans who just want to enjoy the area.

2/24/2009

It has cost the tax payers so much money. Frankly, I would like to see more funding put towards education.

Thank you,

Melinda

mwerner@villaelegante.com

phone 805.565.4459

I am John Dixon owner of Tri-County Produce at 335 S. Milpas St, an area that you are aware has been greatly impacted by transient/homeless problems. **FTR** I am also a board member of Casa Esperanza since 2001, and member of the Milpas Action Task Force since its creation.

I believe we do need compassion and to help those less fortunate. In 2008 I have personally given more than 15 thousand dollars last year towards these causes.

I have attended almost every meeting on this issue beginning back in July of last year, and have read over the draft document. While I like and agree with most of the idea's proposed, based on what we have seen today, after years of continued problems I have very little faith that these recommendations will solve the Milpas and State Street area problems, as most appear to me to have little or no enforcement to them based even on what I read from staff on the Issues.

In reading over the problems and recommendations it appears that they all have **ISSUES** that don't appear doable or enforceable on addressing the recommendations; such as

- There are limited resources and funding
- Funding new programs mean that other program will suffer
- The Police Department has limited funding for restorative policing re-deploying officers will cause other areas of the city to have less enforcement
- **and most notably**
- The City Attorney may have problems prosecuting many of these as misdemeanor offenses

To be specific...on

Recommendation #1 Soliciting and #2 ...Intergovernmental cooperation to curb negative behavior... ISSUES: There could be a potential impact on the City Attorney's Office to prosecute violations of this ordinance as misdemeanor offenses. So once again we will have an ordinance with no teeth and most likely become a civil matter with little or no enforcement or deterrent to the problem people.

Recommendation #3 – restorative policing – lack of funding. Is the council willing to appropriate the necessary funding, especially in such an economic budget crisis as now? Will the Police redeploy resources to Milpas area on an ongoing daily basis, the same request from the State Street Downtown Organization.

Recommendation #4... Recovery Zone – Stay away orders – the orders only deal with Convicted FELONY Drug offenders, and at that, constitutionally exempt from prosecution if they are using shelter services? Only 3% of the top 100 offenders are on parole for drug related issues. The recovery zone does not address the Chronic Inebriates continual drunken in public and open container violations that are now simply treated in civil court as infractions. Also limiting the type of alcohol sold may simply result in an increase in sales of other non-regulated alcohol products.

While I support this, can you at least now understand why I am a little doubtful or hesitant in the success of these recommendations?

Recommendation # 6, **the strong need for more shelter beds**, I believe as stated by your staff in the **ISSUES: that an increase in year round bed count at Casa Esperanza may exacerbate the already negatively impacted Milpas area**. I do not believe it may, but rather **IT WILL**. I am very concerned that these recommendations will move forward, Casa Esperanza will soon get the bed increase and a year later problems still exist, with little deterrent and likely on a greater scale.

Recommendation #11.. **Panhandling/alternate giving campaign**. In the 1st paragraph can we add Milpas merchants to the long list.

Recommendation # 12 **affordable housing projects.....**

what is Santa Barbara's "caring capacity"? I believe that if a developer wished to build on their property they must go through a number of studies to determine traffic, parking and other impacts and the city will establish capacity levels on their development. What is the cities capacity level in caring for the homeless. Is it unlimited? Will it always be just a few more services, shelters and or beds, again and again? Will we be back here again in a few years asking for another increase in the bed counts or to build another homeless shelter?

I am surprised that this report of recommendations has no mention of the Community Kitchen and it's impact by serving lunch to masses only to have many simply return to loiter in the neighborhoods and further contribute to the problems we are continually faced with today. Many of whom are chronic inebriates and we simply continue enabling their behavior. I would like to recommend that the Community Kitchen serves food onsite **only** to those that are enrolled in programs and have a bed, let's try that out for a few years and see the results?

Overall, to me it appears that we are putting the cart before the horse. **I believe we should move forward with all these recommendations, except # 6 and DO NOT increase the bed count at Casa Esperanza, and we evaluate 1 year** from now our progress with all the other recommendations. If we have successfully done a good job in mitigating these problems in the community, at that time we consider the increased need for more beds and where?

In Closing I'd like to quote the words of our new President, **"don't judge me by my words, but rather by my actions"**. Let's hope **THIS TIME** the actions of the city with these recommendations prove to be successful if implemented rather than just words on paper.

Thank You very much for your time.